

A Report to the 42nd District



Kelli Linville

State Representative
42nd District

District address:

1155 N. State St.
Suite No. 324
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 738-6177

e-mail:

linville_ke@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free Hotline:

1-800-562-6000
1-800-635-9993
(hearing-impaired)

Committees:

Agriculture & Ecology,
co-Chair
Appropriations

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Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The first legislative session of the 2000s — believe it or not! — has convened in Olympia.

As always, it is an honor to serve our communities. I'm grateful for the many citizens who take the time to get in touch with me — your thoughts are always helpful in my work to represent our towns and neighborhoods.

Initiative 695, although it wasn't supported by a majority of citizens in Whatcom County, nonetheless captured 58 percent of the statewide vote. It's our job as legislators to implement the terms of the initiative in a way that maintains respect for the importance of schools, as well as support for police and fire departments, local public health, criminal justice and transportation, including transit.

In addition to the impact of the initiative, my report today reviews several other key issues. One way or another, these discussions involve all of us.

- Strong schools. The state constitution hits the nail pretty well on the head: The education of all our kids is the paramount duty of our state.
- Healthy environment. We have a responsibility to keep our natural resources safe and healthy — just as we have a duty to make decisions that don't unfairly hurt any one group of citizens or businesses.
- Good jobs. People in small-town and rural Washington have been on the short end of the economic-development stick for far too long.
- Secure families. Patients have a right to make health-care decisions with their provider, and we all have a right to a decent level of personal privacy.
- Responsive government. It's high time to re-emphasize the fact that citizens pay the taxes, and that we should hold state programs accountable for performance and enact meaningful property-tax relief.

Thank you so much again for your time and interest.

Respectfully yours,

Kelli Linville
State Representative
42nd Legislative District

Representative Kelli Linville

State spending:



Meeting the challenges facing post-695 Washington

We must put the terms of Initiative 695 into effect in the most reasonable way possible. We must respect the message from the voters and answer the demand for more accountability in government.

The initiative replaces the motor-vehicle excise tax with a flat license-tab fee that starts at \$30 a year. This new law also requires a vote of the people on any new tax proposal.

What does this all mean for road and highway projects? How will the new law impact transit systems, police, fire and public-health departments, and other activities that many people have come to expect? According to the governor's budget office, the state will probably lose at least \$1.1 billion in revenue through June 2001.

- 44 percent of that revenue was earmarked for transportation projects, including improvements for highways, the ferry system and mass-transit programs.
- 32 percent was headed for local-transit agencies.
- 21 percent was destined for police and fire departments and other criminal-justice duties in cities and counties.
- And three percent was intended for public-health services such as restaurant and day-care inspections.

"No!" to a bad tax idea

I want to make this very clear: I will not support any plan to put the property tax back on motor vehicles! I don't always agree with the governor, but this is one time — he said that he doesn't support that idea, either — where we're definitely on the same page.

Our state has a surplus of approximately \$1 billion. But keep in mind that state law prohibits the use of 70 percent of that money without a 60-percent supermajority vote.

We're looking at a loss of \$750 million a year in revenue; the surplus, if we did decide to use it, would be gone very quickly and should only be used for one-time expenditures.

Two years ago, voters approved Referendum 49 to use about half the state's now-defunct vehicle excise tax to bond \$2.4 billion worth of transportation projects. Importantly, the revenue from the tab tax was a stable source of money to support the purchase of bonds to pay for these projects. We planned to bond billions of dollars of highway projects with millions of dollars of bondable revenue. Consider this home-buying scenario: A bank will loan you money as long as you have steady employment and good credit. But if you dip into your savings to try to purchase the home, the bank will probably not approve your loan.



Stopping inefficiency

I will continue to support accountability in state government. That's a top priority.

Governor Locke's Savings Incentive Program, which I co-sponsored, has saved many millions of dollars in the last few years. I also support his High-Performance Government proposal for, among other things, contracting out some state services to save money.

Some of the choices before us this year involve mass transit. Should we move money from other parts of the transportation budget, for instance, to help mass transit? Should we preserve the current level of highway-safety and maintenance money by taking funds from other areas? We must meet these and other challenges.

Strong schools:



Quality is so very important, and so, too, are safe classrooms

We need to make sure our schools provide our young people a safe environment and a high-quality education.

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Nothing we do affects tomorrow as much as the instruction we provide today.



We've also got our work cut out in establishing school-accountability — making sure our teachers are well-qualified to instruct their areas. When you send your youngster off to school,

you should be able to feel confident that her or his history teacher knows who's buried in Grant's tomb, so to speak.

Finally, Washington schools shouldn't be so crowded! Did you know that when a student here asks for individual attention from a teacher, the youngster probably has to wait longer than almost any other child in the nation? That's because we have the third most-crowded classrooms. Unacceptable!

Healthy environment:

Health and safety had better get a 'front seat' in our decisions

A top priority for our 2000 Legislative Session is making sure oil and gas pipelines in our communities are safe. We need to work with citizens and companies so these facilities don't pose a threat to our families.

Let's remember that the environment isn't any different than any other issue — we have to work together to do what's best for everyone. One great example of this fact has to do with our responsibility toward clean water. I will continue working for safe, reasonable standards to make sure our water supply is healthy and plentiful.

I will push for standards to clean up Bellingham Bay, and I will also keep pressing my colleagues to renew our recycling emphasis. We should definitely talk about this in terms of these "Three R's": recycle, reuse, reduce.



Good jobs:



Training and retraining are important for our communities

Working families deserve a fair shake — something that, until recently, has been missing in a lot of discussions.

I think it's wonderful that everything's rosy for Seattle and its suburbs. And our towns and neighborhoods have every right to a decent, honest living, including family farming.



In the session this year, I'm striving to win back support for our state's highly successful Timber Retraining Benefits program (TRB). Hundreds of Washington citizens — men and women thrown out of work through no fault of their own — have been retrained in TRB programs to get back to work in good-paying jobs that support their families. In addition, we need to ensure that unemployment-insurance taxes are not raised on business unnecessarily during these strong economic times.

Secure families:



You and your doctor should make your health-care decisions

What kind of sense does it make to have your health-care decisions made by an insurance company instead of you and your doctor? You and your provider should have the right to make the call — that's why a lot of us are supporting a "Patients' Bill of Rights" this year.

Also in the health-care arena, I want more help provided for Washington's low-income senior citizens when they can't afford prescription drugs.

Here are two words you'll see and hear together a lot in the next several years: personal privacy. A California bank recently sold several million credit-card numbers to a convicted felon. The convict used the credit-card information to ring up millions of dollars in unauthorized charges — including a lot of calls to X-rated "services." This sort of personal-privacy invasion shouldn't be allowed.

Responsive government: